

Does the President realize that on his watch, poverty has increased every single year, and that overall household income has decreased?

Does the President realize that at a time when Americans have less money in their wallets, they are trying to squeeze every dollar to pay higher food, gas, education and health care bills?

Madam Speaker, how bad does the economy have to get for the average working man and woman before the President realizes that there is a problem?

This Democratic Congress is not satisfied with the status quo. Over the last year, we have made progress to ease the economic crunch for middle-class, working-class families. We have passed legislation to make college education more affordable, increased the minimum wage, addressed the subprime mortgage crisis, and cut taxes for middle-class families.

We are proud of these accomplishments. We also realize that with most Americans struggling, this economy is just not working.

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS ONCE AGAIN SUPPORTS ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY

(Mr. CLEAVER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Speaker, yesterday the Democratic Congress once again supported energy independence and security. This legislation, which the President is now expected to sign, includes an historic increase in fuel economy standards for vehicles and significant new support for alternative fuels.

This comprehensive Democratic energy bill provides a dramatic shift in our Nation's energy policy, including new standards for buildings, homes, lighting and appliances, and makes great strides in our fight against global warming. It is also something that we can feel good about, because it reduces the price at the pump through increased efficiency standards that reach 35 miles per gallon by 2020. This is the first increase in CAFE standards in 32 years and will save the average driver between \$700 and \$1,000 a year.

Madam Speaker, the protection of our environment is both a spiritual and moral issue, and Congress has failed for too many years to address this issue. I am proud that the Democratic Congress has worked to bring this historic legislation to the floor.

DEMOCRATS CONTINUE TO MOVE OUR NATION FORWARD, BUT PRESIDENT BUSH IS BLOCKING THE WAY

(Mr. ARCURI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ARCURI. Madam Speaker, all year this Democratic Congress has

worked to live up to our promise to move the Nation in a new direction. In many ways, we have been successful, raising the minimum wage, fully implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, and making college more affordable. We are proud of these accomplishments, but there are many other important bills that have been passed with strong bipartisan support here in Congress, only to be vetoed by President Bush.

We sent the President a bipartisan bill that restored harmful cuts to No Child Left Behind, job training programs, and research grants for cures for life-threatening diseases. President Bush said no with his veto pen.

We sent him a bipartisan bill that would ensure 10 million children have access to quality health care. President Bush said no with his veto pen.

We sent him a bill that would bring our troops home from Iraq by the end of next year. Again, President Bush said no with his veto pen.

Madam Speaker, President Bush has stood in the way of real progress, but know that we in Congress will continue to fight to move our Nation in a new direction.

IN STRONG SUPPORT OF THE ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY ACT

(Mr. CARNAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARNAHAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the energy bill that will finally take our energy policy in a new direction, and I urge the President to sign it into law. This bill makes a big step toward greater energy independence and energy security.

The bill includes an historic increase in fuel economy standards, the first since 1975. This increase will save American families an estimated \$700 to \$1,000 a year at the pump and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. We must pursue an energy policy that moves the U.S. towards energy independence, reduces the cost of gasoline to consumers, enhances the development of alternative energy, and substantially reduces threats of global warming.

This bill also sends a clear signal to the rest of the world that the U.S. is finally serious about getting our energy and environmental policy in order. However, we still have more work to do on this issue, and this new Congress is committed to get the job done.

A COMMITMENT TO PASSING A GOOD SCHIP PROGRAM

(Ms. SHEA-PORTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Madam Speaker, I first want to thank Speaker PELOSI, Majority Leader HOYER and all the Members who are so committed to the SCHIP program. This Congress sent

the President very good legislation that would have ensured that millions of low-income children of hardworking Americans could keep health coverage, and it would allow States to enroll millions more who qualified for the CHIP program but aren't covered because the States have not received enough funding. We also had a way to pay for this.

But each time, the President has vetoed that legislation, and here in Congress a number of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle continue to stand with the President blocking the way for this vital program to reach more children. We wanted to insure 10 million children. The President and the Republican leaders only want to insure 6 million children. And that is the crux of the problem here.

Today, we will extend the SCHIP program through March of 2009, but an important aspect of these earlier bills is not included. This past August, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued a directive to State SCHIP directors effectively informing them that they would no longer be able to insure children in families where incomes exceed 250 percent of the poverty level, \$43,000 for a family of three. This is a tragedy, and we will fix it.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE TRENT LOTT

(Mr. BARTON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I hadn't intended to give a 1-minute today, but I just got off the telephone with one of my dear friends, the Senator from the great State of Mississippi, the Honorable TRENT LOTT.

Today is his last day in the United States Senate. After a distinguished career in both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, he is resigning effective, I assume, today or tomorrow, whenever the other body goes out.

I have known TRENT LOTT for the 23 years that I have been in the House of Representatives. When I first got elected, he was the minority whip here in the House. He is one of the wisest, in terms of political knowledge, men that I have ever been around in my political career. He is a great guy personally. He has a great family. He has served not only his State, but his country, with exemplary distinction for the many-odd years that he has been in the House and the Senate.

We are going to miss the Honorable TRENT LOTT of the Magnolia State of Mississippi, and I want to wish him and his family the very best this holiday season and in the years ahead.

God bless TRENT LOTT and his family.

COMMENDING HEATHER LASHER TODD FOR HER SERVICE TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)